Calendar of Events: Friends Events

April 23, 2018, 1:00pm, Snyder Auditorium
Friends regular meeting. Speakers: Dr. Malcolm & Rosemary MacFarlane, “Hunting for Rare Plants of Minnesota.”

June 11, 2018, 11:30 am-1:00 pm, Snyder Auditorium

July 23, 2018, 1:00pm, Snyder Auditorium

September 27, 2018, 3:30pm - 6:00pm, MacMillan Auditorium
Friends of the AHL Annual Book Sale - Friends’ preview.

September 28-30, 2018, 10:00am - 4:00pm, MacMillan Auditorium
Friends of the AHL Annual Book Sale.

October 22, 2018, 1:00pm, Snyder Auditorium

Library Exhibits

Through April 29, 2018
Exhibit: Celebrating 60 years of... the Arboretum!

May 5 - September 3, 2018
AHL & Skyway
Exhibit: Sacred Earth: Exploring the Relationship Between Native American People and Plants
The Andersen Horticultural Library has a diverse collection of materials highlighting the multiple ways in which Native Americans use plants in their daily and ritual lives. This exhibition features rare seed catalogs, children's books, and ethnobotany texts.

September 15-October 28, 2018
Skyway between Snyder Building & Oswald Visitor Center
Exhibit: Flora and Fauna Illustrata: MN Hardy Exhibition

November 3, 2018 - January 3, 2019
Exhibit: FFI: General Exhibition (in conjunction with the Great River Chapter art show in the Reedy Gallery). Venue TBD.

Cover: Cacao pods, Metamorphosis insectorum Surinamensium, by Maria Sibylla Merian, 1705, plate XXVI. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See p. 7.
It’s chilly today as I ponder, but the spreading swaths of bare ground signal a winter in retreat. I like spring a lot, but in a way I also mourn the passing of winter. One of my favorite experiences occurs when the elements are at their worst. I call it cocooning.

The term Cocooning, used in a social context, was first coined in 1981 by futurist Faith Popcorn (seriously; I couldn’t make that up) to describe what she saw as a growing impulse for people to insulate themselves from perceived dangers by staying more often in the comfort and protection of their homes (“cocoons”), aided by the advent of better options for home-based entertainment and comfortable amenities. Her theory generated so much interest that “cocooning” eventually gained entry into major dictionaries.

My use of the term is simpler and refers to taking refuge from a harsh environment by stepping out of it and into someplace warm and protected, like making a white-knuckle drive home in a blinding snowstorm and coming inside to a warm house and blazing fireplace. With the close of a door, the harshness is trapped outside and I’m warm and protected in my “cocoon.” I’ve savored that feeling for decades. When I was but a young lad taking root on the Iowa farm, we had several small six-pen buildings, each pen for holding a sow and her new litter with a heat lamp to help keep the piglets warm. Hanging in a corner of each building was a kerosene-fired heater that looked like a small jet engine spewing hot air. In the deepening dusk of winter evenings I would help carry pails of feed and water through the snow to each house, my ear flaps down and collar up to ward against freezing gusts. I would yank the door open, step inside, and quickly close it behind me. Suddenly it was 70 degrees, bright and calm. I could hear the wind howling a few inches away, trapped outside. For a few minutes I was warm … protected … cocooned.

After I was older, I would guide our John Deere and plow across the fields late into the night from the comfort of its enclosed cab. Once a night or so I would stop for a few minutes in the middle of the field, idle the tractor, zip up my coat and step down into the pre-winter chill. I listened to the engine purr as I walked a few yards away and stopped to look back at the tractor, lit up in the blackness like a small cottage. Even back then I guess I just liked the way it looked warm and inviting, like a sanctuary rising from the cold, dark landscape. Then I would walk back and climb into the cab, max the heater fan, throttle the engine up to a plow-pulling roar … and close the door. Suddenly, the noise was muffled and the cold trapped outside. I was warm … protected … cocooned. More common is the feeling I get after stopping for gas on blustery nights; bundle up, step out into the elements, fill the tank. But then throw off the coat and gloves, jump inside, close the door, max the heater, lights on, doors locked. Cold wind trapped outside and I’m … well, you know.

So I mourn the passing of cocoon season. Sure, you can have harsh weather in any month, but the best cocooning happens in winter, the harshest season. And I didn’t even mention that iconic and popular Minnesota cocoon: the ice fishing house! Have a GREAT spring!
New Days & Hours
Andersen Horticultural Library has new days and hours of operation. Beginning April 1, we are now open Tuesday through Friday, 8:30-4:30, Saturday, 10:30-4:30, and are closed on Sunday and Monday. On Friends meeting Mondays, the library will be open to Friends and their guests after the meeting.

Staffing Changes
There are also changes in staffing. As you may know, Susan Moe resigned from the library in December and Christine Aho retired at the end of March. Their long history at the Arboretum, combined with a depth of knowledge and expertise that served our library visitors well, ensures they will be sorely missed!

Some of you may know Lee Anne Laskey, a new Library Assistant (50% time), from her days working at the front desk in the Oswald Visitor Center. Stop in and say hello! We hope to have an additional 50% position filled in the near future.

Interview
To capture a bit about both Christine Aho (CA) and Susan Moe (SM) for posterity, we asked each of them a few questions. Their answers follow.

When did you start working at the Arboretum/University of Minnesota? In what capacity?
CA: I started at the Arboretum in 1997 and worked in a variety of areas – briefly in Development, at the Learning Center, in Reservations, and at the front lobby desk, both when it was in the Snyder Building and later in the Oswald Visitor Center. Richard Isaacson hired me in July 2005 as a Library Assistant. Before starting at the Arb, I taught Comp101 for a couple years at the U in the English Dept in the late ‘70s and also worked in the Testing Lab at Normandale.

SM: I graduated from the U in 1979 and was hired as a Research Assistant working with Harold Peltlett on breeding azaleas and other shrubs for coldhardiness and aesthetics. I evaluated coldhardiness by freezing plant parts to look for damage at different temperatures. In 1986 I took a 20-year or so break to raise our family. Richard Isaacson hired me as a Library Assistant in July 2005.

Tell us one funny story from your time here.
CA: When you work with the public, lots of funny things happen. Visitors had lots of interesting questions, such as: Are the maples that are being tapped inside or outside? Where should I propose? Are there birds out there? Oh, and the older guy who was walking on Three-Mile Drive in only a thong. When the Director was asked whether wearing thongs at the Arboretum was allowed, he said sure, thinking staff were referring to flip-flops or sandals, not underwear!

SM: A gentleman called one day because his tree had Dutch Elm Disease. He read that a good way to cure it was to dig two circular trenches around the tree and plant garlic in one circle and ginger in the other. He wasn’t calling to find out whether there was any truth to this, but rather to find out which to plant in the inner circle and which in the outer.

What will you miss about the Arboretum? The Library?
CA: Definitely the staff and visitors and chatting with our volunteers.

SM: The people – the staff and volunteers. Also the surroundings – Nakashima and Lundie. Having a window overlooking the pond and walking in the gardens on breaks. I’ll also miss the job – I enjoyed figuring out how to make things work, and there were always new things to learn, new challenges – lots of new computer applications to learn – Drupal, Alma, Wufoo, LibGuides…

(continued)
**Library News**

What's one of your favorite areas at the Arboretum?

CA: High Point, especially when the crabapples are blooming.

SM: Wherever plants are blooming!

What are you most looking forward to in retirement?

CA: Travel! And riding my bike anytime I want. I’m going to attend the book club and other classes at the Arboretum, spend time out in nature, and hope to get to other gardens and to Costa Rica.

SM: More time for gardening and nature. And cleaning stuff out of the house!

Any memorable moments you’d like to share?

CA: Teaching English and World History north of Melbourne, Australia, for two years right after college. It was lots of fun.

SM: Well, I met my husband here! Pete was the Landscape Maintenance Supervisor and I was working for Harold Pellett… Another memorable moment was attending Library Recognition Day on campus with other AHL staff and we all wore big, floppy, colorful “Garden Party lady hats!”

Flora and Fauna Illustrata (FFI) Update


2018 marks the 60th anniversary of the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum and the 110th anniversary of the Horticultural Research Center. To honor the numerous apple, grape, tree, azalea, and other plant varieties introduced by the University of Minnesota, we have invited artists to select a specific “MN Hardy” plant or its parts and render it in scientifically accurate two-dimensional fine art. For more information about MN Hardy varieties, visit <https://mnhardy.umn.edu/variety>.

A few Minnesota Hardy art-works were recently submitted for jury review and some were already accepted into the FFI, including the ‘Autumn Splendor’ Buckeye by Louise Magnuson (pictured to the left) and the Northern Accent roses ‘Sven,’ ‘Ole,’ and ‘Lena,’ created by Linda Thorson.

Our collection, which now consists of 32 pieces, was recently digitized and will be available for viewing on the University of Minnesota’s UMedia Archive later this year. We are excited to announce that artists have been working hard over the winter and jurors will evaluate 13 more works at the spring jury session on April 23rd! These new pieces were created by familiar faces as well as some internationally recognized artists.

Please join us for our upcoming exhibitions in the skyway between the Snyder Building and Oswald Visitor Center:

- **FFI Minnesota Hardy Exhibition**: Sept. 15-Oct. 28, 2018
- **FFI General Exhibition (in conjunction with the Great River Chapter of the American Society of Botanical Artists show)**: Nov. 3, 2018 – Jan. 3, 2019

--Gretchen Wagener Burau

*Aesculus ‘Autumn Splendor’ by Louise Magnuson.*

*Cypripedium calceolus pubescens by Judith Spiegel*

“The oak carries an entire world within itself, but its sinewy, Atlas-like limbs show no sign of strain. This is the King of Trees, the head, heart and habitat of an entire civilisation.” --p. 96. Fiona Stafford’s *The Long, Long Life of Trees* tackles an enormous subject – the meaning of trees. Trees evoke memories, inspire stories and songs, shelter us from storm, provide the paper we write on and the furniture we sit on. They cradle our newborns and house our dead. Silent witnesses to history, their rings are a living record of weather patterns.

Trees are symbols in our religious narratives and provide a way to explain our origins. Who hasn’t heard of Darwin’s “Tree of Life” or Adam and Eve’s temptation in the Garden of Eden? Trees are the setting for meditation and solace. Buddha’s enlightenment takes place under what is known as Mahabodhi or *Ficus religiosa*. In Viking mythology a great ash tree, Yggdrasí, is home to the gods while in Maori culture, the god of the forest and son of the sky and earth are embodied in a 2,000-year-old Kauri tree. John Muir called the giant pines of the American West “the very gods of the plant kingdom.” Artists depict trees as a way to express deeper consciousness. Claude Monet’s poplars, Cezanne’s pines, and the twisted branches of Van Gogh’s olive trees express something that words cannot.

Each chapter in Stafford’s book focuses on a specific tree and opens with an anecdote. “The Royal Oak,” a common pub name in England, reflects the importance of this tree. The pub’s name, the tables, log fire, and art depicting the English countryside, are all centered on oaks. Even the pub’s cheese and fish are flavored with wood smoke.

Oaks are associated with manly character and are a symbol of national pride and wealth. Well-to-do Englishmen were often painted in front of their oaks as a sign of wealth and stability. Vice-Admiral Nelson’s *HMS Victory* was said to be made of 2,000 mature oaks. Many individual centuries-old oaks have been named, e.g., The Bowthorpe Oak, and are prized for their age and character; several of their portraits are featured in one of AHL’s rare books, *Sylva Britannica*.

The author’s chapters on pine and birch trees are peppered with fascinating facts. A 1970s trend that emphasized self-sufficiency and natural materials elevated the use of unfinished pine furniture. Pine resin is used for glues, waxes, solvents, gum, and the making of ropes. The heady scent of pine is popular in bath oils and cleaning products. The rapidly growing pines are valued as masts for tall ships, telephone poles, fence posts, and log cabins. Pines were known to survive the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in the Ukraine.

Birch boughs are often associated with flogging of school boys and rebellious sailors. Tightly bound birch rods with an axe head were a symbol of the power of ancient Rome. Today we see the same symbol on the National Guard flag and in a frieze above the entrance to the U.S. Supreme Court.

One thousand birch trees have been planted in a forest north of Oslo, part of artist Katie Paterson’s project titled *Future Library*. The trees will supply the paper for printing books a century from now, an anthology of new stories being written by 100 of today’s outstanding authors. The stories will be printed and unveiled in 2114 at the Oslo public library (assuming the library is still there).

This beautifully illustrated book is written in lively prose. The author is a University of Oxford professor of English. Her work titled *The Meaning of Trees* can be heard on BBC Radio 3’s *The Essay*. --Christine Aho, Library Assistant

The Caterpillar Lady

Such captivating images! Maria Sibylla Merian (1647-1717) was a German-born decorative artist and self-taught entomologist but she lived in an age in which she was labeled as a mere “enthusiast” because she was female.

Joyce Sidman, award-winning local writer and nationally recognized children’s poet, puts Maria Sibylla Merian’s life in historic context in The Girl Who Painted Butterflies. During the 17th-century Europe, which was dominated by guilds representing various crafts. At 14, girls were considered adults and learned how to run a household. The Tulipmania craze had faded and still-life portraits of flowers were popular. Maria’s first success came early in her first marriage with the publication of Neues Blumenbuch, or, New Flower Book, in 1675.

Maria’s intense interest in nature continued after she left her husband and joined a religious community in the Netherlands called the Labadists. She continued to study insects and became interested in reptiles and amphabians. She was also the first to document the life cycle of a frog! After leaving the religious community she settled in the port of Amsterdam and was exposed to new plants, animals, and insects from the distant tropics.

This inspired her to travel with her daughter to Dutch Surinam in South America. Her time there exposed her to a world exploding with insects and tropical plants as well as the ugliness of the sugar-cane industry: slave labor. Her copious drawings and notes were the basis for Metamorphosis insectorum Surinamensium, which was published in Europe after her return. It opens with an illustration of a growing pineapple and its huge, exotic fruit, but Metamorphosis was not as popular financially as her earlier work.

Merian’s legacy endures. On the day of her death Tsar Peter the Great bought nearly 300 of her paintings for the first Russian art museum. Carl Linnaeus cites her work 130 times for his text Systema Naturae. Maria Sibylla Merian’s paintings are still used as a guide for European and Surinamese insects. An insect whose metamorphosis she studied in Surinam is now extinct. Perhaps her greatest contributions were her keen, detailed observations which connected art and science, as well as insects and plants. She did not let herself be defined by societal expectations. Her life serves as an inspiration to children and adults.

--Christine Aho

AHL has several children’s books by Joyce Sidman, including Swirl by Swirl, Song of the Water Boatman, Butterfly Eyes, and Winter Bees.

The library has many works about Maria Merian, including fine prints of the Leningrad watercolors.
Christine Aho and Susan Moe, pictured here with their husbands Allan and Peter, respectively. More on p. 4.

Photo courtesy of Renee Jensen.